

“Physical & Mental Preparation for the Middle School Track/Cross Country Athlete”

Friday, January 25th @ 11:00-12:00 (Regent room)

What is the purpose / goal of Middle School Track & Field?

Learn/practice good form & good habits (Are you a great/good feeder system for the HS?)

Run with greater ease and efficiency

Be less prone to injury

Become more aware of body mechanics

Improve endurance while getting stronger/faster

Drills, drills and more drills (but FUN!)

Learn/practice good sportsmanship and etiquette

Increase self-confidence/esteem

Become interested/passionate about / for the sport

Become healthier/more fit

Be involved socially and emotionally with others

Physical limitations of 11-14 year olds:

- On-third (33%) of our young athletes are sidelined due to injury.
- According to The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine (AOSSM), children should take 2 to 3 months, or a season, away from a specific sport every year. Young athletes are encouraged to take at least 1 day off each week from organized activity.” With kids playing school sports, participating in traveling teams, and signing up for any additional physical activities, it’s no wonder kids are becoming injured more often and more intensely.

Strategies to prevent injuries:

- Always have an adequate Warm Up and Cool Down (at least 10 minutes each)
- Avoid overtraining / overuse
- Allow sufficient recover/rest
- Teach good fueling program (good nutrition and injury prevention go hand in hand)
- Educate your athlete about good shoes (get the local shoe store or sports medicine doctor to come in and do a presentation.
- Strength training (the athlete’s insurance policy)

Mental limitations of 11-14 year olds:

- Due to chronic stress
- Factors that increase burnout:
 - Sport specialization
 - Time conflicts
 - Interests in other activities
 - A psychological stressor
 - High self-expectations
 - High parental pressure

- How will you know if they are starting to sizzle/burnout?
(Highly predictive items associated with Athlete Burnout – these can go hand in hand with injuries also.)
 - Low number several days in a row
 - Tardy to practice
 - Lack of improvement
 - Absent due to illnesses/injuries
 - Muscle soreness
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Loss of appetite or over eating
 - Mood disturbances
 - Shortness of temper
 - Decreased interest in training and competition
 - Decreased self-confidence
 - Inability to concentrate
 - Significant life event stress

Strategies to prevent burnout:

“Leave it all on the track and don’t look back.”

- Diversify sports training
- Mindfulness practices; 1-Minute Mindfulness Moment before practice. Relaxation.
- Visualization practices; at the end of Cool Down do 2 minutes of visualization. Mental imagery.
- Positive mantras (Setting up Positive Self-Talk) Motivational Quotes...Thought control.
- Touch base at the start of every practice; Ask, what’s your number? (1-10) this will tell you exactly where your athlete is.
- Learn and practice coping skills. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Thinking/Feeling/Acting)
- Provide perspective.
- Parental support; studies show that MS athletes want their parents to make comments on effort and attitude, rather than performance. They want them to encourage the entire team, not just be concerned with the outcome. Show interest, listen, help the athlete to have the things he/she needs- all have positive influences on motivation, performance and thus minimizes injury risk. (yes, there is a correlation)

- Give positive feedback as often as possible. Also, ask, after a poor performance or a loss, what did you learn?
- School announcements of results for athlete recognition.

Most common injuries:

- Growth spurt associated; growth plates
- Longer recovery
- Nonlinearity of growth
- Immature or underdeveloped coordination, skills and perception
- Females! Noncontact anterior cruciate ligament injuries, due to anatomy, hormones and menstrual cycle, neuromuscular characteristics, muscle strength, and flexibility

Risk factors: (Journal of sports Medicine, v7 2016)

- Growth spurt
- Postural control (modifiable)
- Biologic maturity
- Body size
- Dehydration (modifiable)
- Pervious injury (modifiable)
- Volume of training (modifiable)
- Fatigue (modifiable)
- Menstrual irregularity
- Low-energy availability (modifiable)